

Local context of Stevenage, Herts

Stevenage grew in population from 4048 people in 1902 to 87,700 by 2017. It was developed as 'a new town' and many families were relocated from the East End of London in the 1950's. Camps Hill Primary School was built in 1951 in the Chells Ward; originally an infant and junior school it amalgamated in 1979. The Chells Ward has seen expansion in population over the last 15 years, as private housing has been built within the catchment of the school. The 'selling off' of Council owned property has resulted in professionals moving into the catchment area and privately rented properties becoming available. This has brought an increase in role to the school and a decrease of those pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant (falling from 35% in 2010 to 22% in 2019). The need for wraparound care has also increased and the school works hard to meet this local demand.

Because of the towns' good transport links to London and the East of England via road and train, affordable housing and access to services, Stevenage has changed over time. The school now experiences high mobility due to economic migration and vulnerable families 'jumping' due to rehousing/ DV or CP involvement. The highest EAL group is Romanian and there is a large community within the town. The website has the ability to be changed into many languages as there are 21 languages spoken at the school. Many of the schools in the area have a high number of children from a traveller background, there is one at Camps Hill presently.

Aspiration in the town is low and Stevenage has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the county (used to be second in the UK). Some of the families served by the school are from 3rd/4th generation unemployment and there is a challenge to engage with some of our families. The DFE recognises Stevenage as an 'opportunity area' and in it is estimated that 24% of children live in poverty (in some wards such as nearby Bedwell it is estimated recently that 5/6 children are living in poverty). Life expectancy for both males and females living in Stevenage is below Herts and National averages. The school has had up to nine CLA children at a time. Due to a lack of foster carers in the county, children are often placed out of county and moved to different schools in other LA.

Spelling is a constant focus for the schools in the local area. The Stevenage dialect puts emphasis on different sounds within words and many of our children struggle to phonetically sound out words correctly. 'They spell how they speak' (fort/thought, dem/them).

In Herts, there has been a reduction in the services available to families such as Surestart and as a result of the recent reorganisation of the Children's Centres. This has had a significant impact to the families at Camps Hill. The school now runs Parenting Courses, has an onsite Domestic Violence Worker and has funding for seventeen disadvantaged two year olds.

Community spirit is strong in Stevenage. There are a number of committed charities who work alongside the school to provide food, clothing and contribute to our enriched curriculum. Schools work collaboratively across the town and there is a Headteachers' agreement in place to share information in order to safeguard children and reduce mobility. A number of smaller local schools more recently have refused to take managed moves or children with more complex needs due to budget constraints; this has put increased pressure on larger primaries who have the places available. Parents have been recently bypassing the county integration service and applying for in-year admissions without disclosing pupil needs.

At present there is no specialist provision for Autism in Herts. The town has had this as a targeted area of need for the DSPL Board. Camps Hill has submitted a SEND bid, alongside a local secondary school, to provide ASD 'Hubs' for children 4-18 years. This bid has been approved and funding is set to be released by April 2020.

There are a limited number of MATs operating in Hertfordshire. The Claxton Trust, named after the town's planner: Eric Claxton, was created in 2017 to serve local need in two large primary schools. The two Headteachers of these schools are also board members. Both academies provide school to school support in a number of local schools and work within other organisations to improve provision for the children of Stevenage and beyond.